

**PRESS BRIEF G-2129**

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U.S. COAST GUARD ATLANTIC AREA PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

**SPEAKERS:  
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NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
(NOAA)**

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ROBERT, LOUISIANA**

LT. CMDR. ROB WYMAN: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Lt. Cmdr. Rob Wyman, chief of the joint information center here at the unified area command in Robert, Louisiana. Thank you for attending today's press conference.

With us today is Rear Adm. Mary Landry – L-A-N-D-R-Y. She's the federal on-scene coordinator. We also have Mr. Mike Saucier, S-A-U-C-I-E-R. He is with MMS and is the regional director of field operations. We have Mr. Doug Suttles – S-U-T-T-L-E-S – BP's chief operating officer. Also with them today is Mr. Charlie Henry from NOAA.

We'll begin today with opening remarks followed by questions from the members of the media here in the audience. And then at that time we'll open up the phone lines to those members that have dialed in.

I'd like to just quickly review the ground rules. If you could please silence your phones or turn them off. Please raise your hand and wait to be called upon so that we can bring you the microphone. Please provide your name and affiliation. And if you would, please limit it to one question per – when you have the microphone. What we'll do is we'll come back around to you if we have additional time for follow-ups. Thank you.

REAR ADM. MARY LANDRY: Good afternoon, everyone.

Yesterday everyone watched the riser insertion tube tool which was placed in the leaking riser, which sits about 500 feet from the well in the BOP stack and 5,000 feet below the surface. Currently BP is having some success with that mitigation – spill mitigation operation – and they're going to give you more detail in a few minutes.

I have to emphasize, though, this will diminish the leak; it will not contain it completely. And we're really eagerly awaiting BP's work with the top kill procedure. And I'm sure they'll speak a little bit more to that. That procedure's supposed to take place and begin later in the week.

What's good news today, though, is that we did have – the weather has been kind to us again. The winds offshore are shifting, and we are – we are expecting a great week for cleanup. And we have a controlled burn plan. We're going to have four controlled burns offshore. We've got skimming offshore. We've got applying, in a very controlled fashion, dispersants on the surface as well as some subsea surface – subsea dispersant. And we're also – we've got teams everywhere out there for the areas where there has been shoreline impact. I have to emphasize, there's thus far been minimal shoreline impact.

We also have the Mississippi River at its height, so we have a good outflow from the Mississippi River, which is actually helping us to push that oil and keep it offshore as we work to fight this as far offshore as possible. So we've had great news and great cooperation with the weather, and we're very confident we're going to get some good work done in the next few days.

We have also – we know there are concerns with our use of dispersants. And certainly we talked in previous days about the threshold we crossed when we decided to use subsea

dispersant. I just want to emphasize that this – this was not done lightly, and it was done in great cooperation with all the federal agencies and in consultation with the states.

But one thing that is important to note is the use of subsea dispersant does allow us to use less by volume, less amount of subsea dispersant. And we certainly are, you know, measuring and weighing what are the advantages. We are using vessels on the surface to apply dispersants this week, but it's only in isolated areas where we've got real value. And the real value comes from injection at the subsurface.

We also want to explain to everyone that we really – we do this with trade-offs. It's all a series of trade-offs. And we're really trying to minimize the environmental impact of all these – all these response strategies that we're employing. The use of subsea dispersants is being done with a very strict monitoring protocol. There's data being collected. There's folks from the federal government that are working this.

And we also obviously are going to work with the scientific community.

I know NOAA and the EPA are very committed to working with scientific community as we gather this data, analyze it and study its impact on the environment.

Finally, for those who – I want to add, for those who may have seen reports yesterday from the research that was conducted on the vessel Pelican – and there was a lot of discussion about the potential of subsurface plumes of oil – we want to refer you to the NOAA administrator, Dr. Lubchenco's, statement that was released today.

And she referred to the fact that this information might have been taken out of context; parts of the information might have been misleading to some, and somewhat premature. And NOAA is working with the Pelican researchers. We really don't want you to take this information out of context and think that there are large plumes of oil subsurface going on.

They're going to work with the Pelican to study and look at the data they gather, along with the data we are gathering constantly, to analyze what's really going on below the surface. So I refer you to Dr. Lubchenco's statement that was released, and it's on our website.

So I'm just going to close with – I mean, this is a good week. This is a good week for offshore cleanup. This is a good week for – as we move towards the top kill procedure, this is – this is – I'm thankful the weather is cooperating with us, and we're very thankful that we have, you know, very, very extensive resources in place to respond, should there be impact on the shoreline.

And I think I'll stop there. We're going to have Mike give us an update from MMS, right? Okay.

MICHAEL SAUCIER: Thank you, Adm. Landry.

As an update to MMS's review and approval of operations to secure the well, the drilling permit for the second relief well has been approved and the rig – the deepwater driller, too, is presently on location.

MMS continues to review numerous procedures to prepare for the top kill and the junk shot methods. The top kill method, just to give a little background as to what it is, and basically involves pumping heavyweight mud to overcome the pressure of the flow coming up the well. MMS continues to closely monitor ongoing operations associated with the flow at the end of the riser while work continues in advancing other options. It's important that plans for any alternative operation to stop the flow of oil at the sea floor are carefully reviewed by MMS engineers to ensure that procedures are conducted safely and to minimize the risk of any additional impact.

Interior Secretary Salazar came to Robert's unified command on Saturday. While he was here, he voiced the continued support of both the president and the Department of Interior to a quick resolution. As Secretary Salazar has stressed numerous times on the response, we are committed to learn the valuable lessons from this incident. This will go beyond just the direct causes for determining – determined for this incident. As a result, the Interior Department's regulatory function will be more prepared and stronger to perform necessary work, ensuring the safety of the offshore energy program. I will now turn it over to Doug Suttles of BP.

DOUG SUTTLES: Thanks, Mike. And thanks, Adm. Landry.

Before I give you an update on our activities over the last day or so, I'd just like to share some views from the scene. This morning, I flew over the spill area and over the area of activity with Gov. Jindal from the state of Louisiana. And I can actually reinforce the admiral's comments. Our efforts offshore are making a big difference now. The combination of the riser insertion tube with using dispersants and other tools – this is probably the smallest amount of oil I've seen on the surface since the effort began.

And in fact, if you look at the map to my left, which shows the outline of the affected area, I would actually tell you that most of that area is either open water or sheen, with only small amounts of areas of dispersed oil and some heavier oil around the well site, but the smallest amount of heavy oil I've seen to date.

Clearly the big news over the last 36 hours has been the success with the riser insertion tool. As we speak, we're getting a little over a thousand barrels of oil a day up through that tube. And over the course of today, we'll be trying to increase that rate as we begin to what we call "open the choke." And we're doing that carefully and slowly so that we don't introduce water into the system and end up with hydrate formation, the problem we had with the original dome.

So we're very encouraged by this. But I would just reinforce Adm. Landry's comments that this doesn't stop the flow. It just attempts to capture it so that it doesn't come out to sea. And this oil is going into the vessel Enterprise, so it's not ending up on the ocean.

Our next effort to try to stop the flow will occur late this week or early in the weekend coming up, and it's the top kill procedure Mike just referred to. If that's successful, we would be bringing this incident to a close.

Offshore, as we've already discussed, we should be able to apply all of our tools over the next few days. It's almost flat calm offshore today. It's as pleasant a day there as it is here in Robert. So I'm actually encouraged that by tomorrow we should be able to report great results from those activities.

We've already reported that we began – we're continuously using subsea dispersants now, which appear to be working and having a significant impact on the activity. Our first relief well, being drilled by the DD III, continues its activities. It should resume drilling today. And the DD II started our second relief well yesterday.

As we look at the total scale of this activity, it still remains very, very large – almost 19,000 people involved, over \$500 million spent to date and a massive fleet of vessels and equipment also being utilized.

On the more human side, yesterday I had the opportunity to go to Mobile and see our command post there and also go to Foley, Alabama, and visit one of our claims centers.

I had the opportunity while I was there to speak with a family who had just filed a claim, who are in the charter boat business. And of course, what they were worried about was the fact that the tourists aren't coming in the same numbers that they had been coming, despite the fact that there isn't any oil ashore and despite the fact that the oil has never gotten closer than 40 miles from shore.

So to offset some of these impacts, earlier this afternoon BP announced that we would be providing financial grants to the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida to support their efforts to kick-start the tourism industry and to make sure the tourists are aware of the current conditions, which in particular along the Mississippi, Alabama and Florida coasts are open for business. So with that I'll be happy to stop and take your questions.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: At this time we'll go ahead and open it to questions from those in the audience.

Q: Jeffrey Collins with the Associated Press. Mr. Suttles, what do you think is – what's the optimum amount of oil that the riser insertion tube should be able to take out, roughly speaking, of the total volume of the leak?

MR. SUTTLES: Yeah, it's very difficult to know the answer to that. I would say if we could get as much as half or more of the total flow. So if we could actually see this recovering, say, in excess of 2,000 barrels a day, I think we would all be extraordinarily pleased. But I would tell you I'm very pleased to say that we're already capturing over a thousand barrels a day.

But what's critical here is we not introduce water into the system because at that point it would probably stop working. So we'll be taking this increase in rate doing it very, very carefully.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Next question.

Q: Elizabeth Shogren with National Public Radio. There have been some reports about the oil getting into the Loop Current that flows not far, I guess, from where the leak has been seen. Do you have any confirmation from NOAA or elsewhere that this is happening? And if so, what are your concerns related to that?

REAR ADM. LANDRY: We are working very carefully with NOAA. And we know that the oil has not entered the Loop Current at this time. There might be some leading-edge sheen that's getting closer to the Loop Current, but it – but this spill has not entered the Loop Current.

The important thing to focus on is the volume of oil that we have on the surface. And it's being reduced as we – as we speak. And as Doug Suttles talked to you about in his overflight, we are confident that we can continue to fight this spill offshore.

And then we're working with the state of Florida and with NOAA to analyze the trajectory of what if it were – what if the volume were to increase because you have a problem with any of these mitigation measures that you're doing – what if the volume were to increase and what would – what impact might that have?

But the Loop Current is something we're watching very carefully. But at this time this oil spill has not intersected with the Loop Current and we're staying in constant contact with the state of Florida and with others about that potential.

Q: (Inaudible, off mike) – no sheen either or sheen –

REAR ADM. LANDRY: Leading-edge sheen is getting close, but it's not been picked up by the Loop Current yet. We're monitoring it very carefully. The leading-edge sheen of this spill has not entered the Loop Current even. Now, we will watch very carefully for any, you know, volume of oil. But the larger volume of oil near the well head is several miles from this Loop Current.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Any other questions from the audience? (Pause.)

Q: Jamie Tarabay from National Public Radio. You're going to have to bear with me, because I'm going to read your question from someone at our science desk who is much brainier about this sort of thing than I am. There's apparently a nine-inch drill pipe running through the blowout preventer. Presumably the choke and kill bypass lines would pump mud and cement into the space between the walls of the blowout preventer and the drill pipe.

How would that clog what BP says is the main flow – that is, the oil inside the nine-inch drill pipe? How far down the hole does the nine-inch drill pipe extend below the loop? And if that's the plan, are you worried that mud and cement will flow up the drill pipe, at least initially, and what would that do to the four-inch pipe sucking oil and gas to the surface?

MR. SUTTLES: And that's a complicated question. (Laughter.)

Q: That's why I – (inaudible, laughter).

MR. SUTTLES: So – I don't blame you for reading it, actually. And what I don't want to do is spend the next 20 minutes trying to answer it because I don't think people would want me to do that.

What a dynamic kill does or a top kill, as Mike's already described, is by pumping at very high velocity down these – what are called choke and kill lines, which are two-, three-inch lines which enter the blowout preventer – if we pump at very high rates, with heavy fluids, we should be able to overcome the flow, and it will go down the path of the flow – it's how it should work – if it's successful. And at some point the weight of those fluids – because these fluids are much heavier than oil and much heavier than water – they will actually stop the well from flowing. And that's the way it works. If we were to go into more detail, to be honest, we'd have to get out some drawings and actually do a much more detailed explanation.

Q: But one of the questions Jamie wanted to say was, does attempting that destroy your temporary fix that – (inaudible, off mike)?

MR. SUTTLES: Ah, no, a very good clarification. So for anyone who didn't hear that, it was, by doing this, do we somehow impact the riser insertion tool when we go to capture this flow? No is the answer to that question. The riser insertion tool is at the end of the almost 5,000-foot long riser where the flow's coming out. So it should not prevent us from doing that if the dynamic kill is unsuccessful.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Anybody else – (inaudible, off mike)?

MR. SUTTLES: Can I just add – I just want to come back to the previous question briefly. I think one of the perceptions we need to somehow provide more information to get past is, there are not large quantities of thick oil on the sea anywhere associated with the spill, even near the well.

So as we ask questions about the Loop Current and others, it's important to actually understand there is not thick, heavy oil on the ocean out here around this particular well. In fact, the oil is the thinnest I've seen yet. But we need to make sure we understand, as the admiral said, most of the area impacted is actually sheen.

Q: Adm. Landry, on the – this regards the NOAA statement. Am I understanding you correctly? Is NOAA saying that there is no solid scientific evidence that there are these large underwater oil plumes that were reported this weekend?

REAR ADM. LANDRY: I'm going to let NOAA answer it.

Q: Can you state your name for me, please?

CHARLIE HENRY: It's Charlie Henry, H-E-N-R-Y. No, what – the answer to your question is, NOAA is not saying that there's not hydrocarbons that are from this well in the water. I think a lot of it comes to, if you talk to actually the researchers – which – who actually were doing pretty good work from the Pelican – but I think what the NOAA statement was that a lot of the information was taken out of context and was incorrect. And I think that is true.

What the researchers found is, using different types of instruments, they were able to detect – well, what they – what we think is hydrocarbons in the water column. That was stated as oil, but it wasn't like oil you'd see. The research itself said when you looked at the sample jars, they were as clean as – you couldn't see anything in them, okay. That information has not been analyzed. None of the quantitative analysis has been done on that. We don't even know what for sure is in those samples.

So basically a lot of reports came out and were taken to another level that – right now they don't have the quantitative analysis or the information to even support it. And we had a long talk yesterday with the folks that were doing that cruise. And I think they were doing good science and doing good work, but I think it's how it was related to as these layers of oil, which is totally untrue.

We do know that when we talked in the past about how this oil comes up as droplets – they come to the surface. Some of those droplets don't make it to the surface. And we've always estimated about how much they were, and we know that it's a relatively small fraction of that. And we were – been doing studies and surveys and tracking and looking at that. And it backs into some of mitigation techniques we're doing.

So the key is whether or not they detect anything or not. We don't know from their analysis. They don't have the data back. I'm really curious to see the data. We'll use the data. I think they did good work. But they don't have the information yet to report it. It's how that that was restated – gave an impression that was not true.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: We have time for two more questions from the audience. We'll take one from you, sir, in the blue shirt, and then from the front row.

Q: This is for Mr. Suttles. I'm Matt Gutman from ABC. Hello. First of all, why top kill and not junk shots – although I think you may have answered that partially? And you said that if you managed to do the top kill later this week or this weekend, that will be the end of this incident. Does that mean you would stop drilling the relief wells? And, you know, there are two of them, I guess. And lastly, would that mean that if you do control the well, that'd mean you may at one point in the future decide to pump oil from it?



MR. SUTTLES: You know, very good questions. So the first is, is that we still have available a number of different techniques to stop the flow. And we continue to evaluate those. And as Mike's already mentioned, we work with the MMS on working through those procedures.

As we stand here today, we think the most likely one we'll deploy is top kill. That is the method we think we'll be deploying later this week or this weekend. And after we pump the heavy fluids, we'll follow that with cement.

But it's critical to know that that should stop the flow. It doesn't end the well. We will actually finish the relief well and pump cement into the bottom of this particular well. There is absolutely no intent to ever, ever produce this well.

We intend to fill up the bottom portion of this well with cement. It will never produced. And we need to make sure people are very, very clear on that.

Q: Thank you. Oh, and the first part: Why not junk shot?

MR. SUTTLES: Oh, I'm sorry, yes. What we're – what we're trying to do is there's a – the principle we've talked about since the beginning was actually making sure we took no action which could make it worse or denies us other opportunities in the future. And we actually – if we try top kill and it's unsuccessful, we can always try junk shot after that. But there are certain risks with junk shot which actually might deny us the opportunity for other options. So that's why we're headed the direction we are just now.

But I'd stress here, the final decision hasn't been made. And we'll be using the best experts inside of BP and the MMS and other government agencies when we finally make that final call. But that's the view as we stand here right now.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Okay. Next question.

Q: Yes. I just wanted to make sure I have this right. You said, Mr. Suttles, that there is – appears to be less oil on the surface now than you've seen in quite some time. Does that mean – is that because of the dispersants? And does that mean that some of that oil is indeed staying underwater or sinking to the bottom?

And, secondly, just to follow up on the previous question, why would you not produce oil from this well?

MR. SUTTLES: Right. So just – the first question about why there's less oil right now, I mean, it comes back to we've had this arsenal of weapons, if you will, which we've been using to fight this spill offshore, and that's everything from skimming to burning, to actually use of dispersants, and now, actually, this riser-insertion tool, which is preventing it from ever getting onto the surface to begin with.

And as we deploy these techniques, we're successful. And as the admiral has already stated, the better the weather, the more techniques we can apply and the more successful those techniques are. On dispersants?

Q: Subsea dispersant does keep some of the oil below the surface?

MR. SUTTLES: Yeah, so let me explain how that works, and then if Charlie wants to add some to it, he's much more of an expert than I am. But the concept of a dispersant is, it breaks the oil into very, very tiny droplets. And it allows the microbes, the bacteria that are actually in the water which eat oil, to eat that oil. It makes it much simpler to do that.

So that's the concept behind the dispersant. It accelerates a natural biodegradation process. And that does have an effect. And that's actually why we had preapproved, at least for surface use, at the beginning. This is an effective tool and it's used around the world. Even though I know there's a lot of interest in this and there are lots of concern around it, but actually, that's the mechanism as it works.

And as the admiral stated, these are tradeoffs. And one of the things we've always said since the beginning is we don't want this oil to come ashore. We think it creates the most harm when it does. And actually, to date, we've had very, very limited impact to the shoreline. And what impact we have had has been in the form of either emulsion or tar balls. We have not had anything beyond that to this point.

REAR ADM. LANDRY: Can I – can I clarify, too? I think it caught all our eyes when Doug Suttles said if we get this top kill we're done. We are not done. We are so – this is an enormous response. There is required science that's going to follow the use of subsea dispersants. There is work going on to figure out not just the monitoring subsurface, working with the federal team that's been put in place to do the actual direct monitoring, but also working with all the other research vessels and all the other communities of people that – scientists that study the Gulf of Mexico. There's going to be a team put together of scientists to analyze this for a long time.

In terms of the top kill, there was a team of scientists – not only BP engineers, but also other companies – and then there was the whole of federal government – the secretary of energy, the secretary of interior; you know, people were brought in to analyze these procedures because of the risks associated with them and the fact that you've got to get it right; you've got to secure this well.

And then the other piece of just looking for – beyond the subsea oil and the plumes and the dispersants, there's also shoreline impact: Is anything we've done on the surface using dispersants or doing cleanup offshore – is there anything trailing towards the shoreline? So we have teams out there along the shoreline not only looking at what's coming ashore but also what might be in the subsurface. We can use crab pots that are loaded with sorbents, and they're pulling those up to see is there anything subsurface.

So, you know, we have a responsibility to answer to where all this oil has gone, and we are in the midst of doing that and we will continue to do that. And I can tell you that this response is going to go on for a long time beyond securing the well.

Q: And what about the issue of producing from the well? Why not ever producing this well?

MR. SUTTLES: Yes. The reason we're not ever going to produce this well is actually it's flowed in an uncontrolled manner and that can't be repaired. So the right thing to do is permanently plug this well. And that's what we will do.

And we'll attempt to stop the flow later this week. If that's successful, then that will prevent new oil from spilling. And then over the – or by the early part of August, we expect to have the relief well down, which will permanently cap the well. And that would be the plan.

And I'd fully agree with Adm. Landry. What I was referring to was stopping the flow, stopping the spilling of oil that's occurring. The actual total response effort, whether that's about cleaning up what's there or whether that's about monitoring for the impacts will continue on for quite some time.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Thank you. At this time we do need to go to the callers who dialed in today. Operator, if you would open the line to questions.

OPERATOR: Yes, thank you. The first question will come from Jaquetta White with The Times.

Q: Hi. Thanks for taking my call. As the oil is being sucked out by the insertion tube and going aboard the ship, is it being treated and refined for selling, or is it being treated as waste? What's happening to it?

MR. SUTTLES: Well, we haven't actually gotten to the point of answering that question. The drill ship Enterprise will hold about 125,000 barrels. So it's got a lot of storage.

At some point that oil will need to be disposed of and it depends on what its condition will be. If it's obviously a product that can be refined, that's what will happen. If it's a product that needs to be disposed of then that's what will happen. But actually that hasn't been a great deal of focus of our attention at this point.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Next question, please.

OPERATOR: Bryan Walsh from Time magazine.

Q: Hi. This is a question for Doug Suttles. You said you're hoping that the riser tool could capture perhaps about half of the oil coming out, which I think you said is about 2,000 barrels. Does that mean you know – you're certain how much is actually leaking and that it is

about that 5,000-barrel figure we used to hear before? Or, I mean, how do you know actually how much might be captured if you're not sure how much is actually coming out?

MR. SUTTLES: Well, how we'll know how much is captured is, we can actually meter it on board the drill ships. So actually we can measure what's being recovered up there. What we actually don't know is the exact rate on the seabed. We've talked about this a great many times. And that's our best estimate today.

Clearly people are constantly asking that question. But I think the thing we always come back to is our response, the unified command's response, BP's response to this event, is not dependent upon what that flow rate is. We are responding with everything we have to minimize the impact. And the one thing we will know is the rate that – the amount of oil that comes aboard the drill ship Enterprise that we actually can measure.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Next question, please.

OPERATOR: Bettina Boxall, L.A. Times.

Q: Mr. Suttles, could you please explain a little bit more about why the top kill technique was not the first thing used?

MR. SUTTLES: Yeah, the – we've been studying, as we talked about. Since this began, we've had multiple techniques to try to bring the well to stop flowing. And we parallel-path these because we were never certain which one would be successful. The challenge here is the water depth that predominantly is the big challenge. The reason we didn't start with the top kill technique is this concern about, in doing that process, would we somehow make the situation worse.

What we had to do was get certain diagnostic information, make certain measurements across this blowout preventer and across this damaged riser before we were comfortable that taking that action would not make the situation work – worse – and that it would actually work. We've been gathering that data over time. We're now to the point we think we have the information we need and we're now finalizing the required equipment to do the work.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Next question, please.

OPERATOR: Mark Schleifstein, the Times.

Q: Yes. I have a question about the oil that is in the water away from the rig, and that is whether there are any plans to do more than just doing skimming operations and burning at the surface, but rather to identify large plumes that may or may not exist underwater and then find ways of getting them. Are there plans to do that?

MR. SUTTLES: Well, let me – let me make a couple of comments, and I think the admiral and Charlie will probably want to speak on this.

We're doing a number of things to locate oil before it has any adverse impact, or to minimize that impact. And near shore, the admiral's already spoke about some of these. Not only do we monitor it on the surface, we're checking these, for instance, these crab pots. We're actually going to be pulling trawl nets down to a hundred feet water depth, to see if there's submerged oil there. And we actually have a water-sampling program that's fairly extensive that's associated with the use of dispersants. So all of these techniques are trying to determine, if we have oil, where it is and what we would actually do about it.

REAR ADM. LANDRY: Before we talk to the plumes – and I'd love Charlie to really answer the plumes specifically – we want you to know about the fisheries closures, both Louisiana and the federal fisheries closures. It's important to get as good a data as possible, working with them to reopen fisheries that don't need to be closed. And I know there's been work done on that already by both the state and the federal government, and sampling, you know, in the areas of oyster beds and other things so that we can not – so we can minimize the impact on the fisheries, both commercial and recreational. And I know that work is ongoing. And then Charlie would like to speak to the plume.

MR. HENRY: Well, I'll speak in – well, in general on the – on the question as it was asked. I believe it was, you know, are there efforts being taken to really determine the overall fate of the oil and the environment – you know, not only what was collected but what may not have been collected that may have, you know, gone through different types of processes, natural processes, some of it even natural degradation and biodegradation and in different compartments of the environment.

And those are the things that create the threat to the fisheries and the long-term – or even short-term impact to some of our coastal nursery grounds and the coastal marshes – which is why we look at trying to combat the spill as far offshore as we can, to protect those areas.

There's multiple research projects going on that are part of – that are part of the process, as we call it: the natural resource and damage assessment process. And that's only one element. There's also research going on – or actually, you know, you can call it applied science going on – to try to determine where some oil may be in the environment that we're – might be missing, such as the crab pot traps or seeing if there's any subsurface oil near some of these areas that have not shown anything to date.

We're also doing monitoring near the well release trying to characterize any of those subsurface, you know – you know, plumes that are there, and any issues that are associated with the subsea dispersant release. That's all part of what we call a management – we call an adaptive management approach to – both to our monitoring program and to the response actions that were taken.

I try to sometimes call it we take baby steps, we do something, see what the result is; if it's good, if we think the benefit is there then we move further with it; we try to fill in the unknowns and the holes. It may be a long time before we actually have all of the information collected and synthesized to really paint a full picture. But we're really looking hard to paint that full picture. We're under – my agency, as a whole, NOAA considers this very important because

those are our resources out there. And so we are taking a lot of effort and time to analyze and study that.

Do we have all the answers yet? No. It will take time. But we are – we are working to answer that question fully.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Operator, we have time for two more questions from the phone lines.

OPERATOR: Thank you. The next question will come from Tom Fowler with Houston Chronicle.

Q: Hi. Thanks for taking the call. I've actually got three questions.

First, if you'd talk a little bit about the possible risks to the well and even the BOP itself with the top kill. I'm wondering, given the hydraulic leaks that were reported in the BOP previously, if there's, you know, danger of doing further damage or even creating some sort of a breach lower down in the well – in the well itself, in the casing.

Also was wondering if the control module had been rewired and replaced. You guys had reported that it had been taken off about a week ago – and what – if it is replaced, what sort of information it has given you.

And then, also, if you can confirm the – there was a report on “60 Minutes” last night about – saying about four weeks before the incident the – where the drill pipe actually moved while the BOP was engaged. I was wondering if you guys can confirm that incident.

MR. SUTTLES: Okay. I think – I think I recall all three, so I'll try to tackle those.

I think the first one about the risk with pumping a top kill. What we needed to do was measure actually the pressures that the well was flowing out to determine what the likely pressures would be and be required to actually perform a top kill operation.

About a week ago we managed to get the first pressure from the lower part of the BOP, and since then we've been able to measure that pressure several times, as well as the pressure at the top of the BOP. Those pressures are fairly low compared to what we were concerned about. And they've been dropping, which is also a good sign. So we needed that data before we could make that assessment. And that's what's given us the confidence to move forward, and that's the piece – the primary piece of data we actually needed.

I'm trying to recall the second question now.

REAR ADM. LANDRY: The control panel.

MR. SUTTLES: Ah, the – what's called the yellow pod. Why we needed to recover the yellow pod – it's one of the control devices on the BOP – is the yellow pod actually controls the

valves on the choke and the kill lines. We need to be able to control those valves to be able to pump the top kill operation, and that's why we had to bring it to the surface and modify it. I don't believe it's yet been rerun, but the plan is to rerun that very, very soon.

And your last question about items referred to on "60 Minutes" – I did not see the show and I'm not involved in investigations, so I'm not in a place to be able to answer your question.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Operator, last question, please.

OPERATOR: Jim Polson with Bloomberg News.

Q: The question actually is for Mike. Chris Oynes, the associate director for Offshore Energy and Minerals Management, has left or is leaving. Does that have anything to do with the Deepwater Horizon incident? And how will his departure affect the response?

MR. SAUCIER: Well, I am aware of the announcement, but that's really all we know at this point.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes today's press conference. Thank you for your time. We will have some people stay behind if we couldn't get to your questions today. Thank you.

OPERATOR: Thank you for your participation.

(END)